DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 240 547 CS 207 602

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TITLE Achieving Impact through the Interpersonal Component.
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (34th, Detroit, MI, March 17-19, 1983).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Audience Analysis; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Communication; *Language Styles; Literary Devices; Reader Response; Rhetoric; Rhetorical Criticism; Student Attitudes; Textbook Content; Writing for Publication; *Writing Instruction; Writing Processes; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS Reader Text Relationship; Reading Writing Relationship; *Textual Analysis; Theory Practice Relationship; *Voice (Rhetoric)

ABSTRACT

Given critical theory's current focus on the interaction between writers and readers over the surface of a text, it seems appropriate to examine the semantic component concerned with how writers anticipate that interaction--the interpersonal component. The relevance of the interpersonal component is apparent in traditional instruction on point of view and tone. Most composition texts encourage students to maintain a consistent point of view through consistent lexical and grammatical choices of a certain formality and purpose; many texts also encourage students to think of these choices within an initially determined rhetorical stance incorporating attitudes toward the reader and the subject matter. But the scalar nature of these choices reveals interesting information about why some shifts in point of view and tone are considered acceptable and others are identified as performance errors. An analysis of several text samples reveals that certain shifts do occur in "professional" texts, but that such shifts must be modulated in order to be acceptable; unmodulated, abrupt shifts will still be perceived as mistakes. Further, such shifts must occur within the limits of variation established at the beginning of a text. The treatment of point of view and tone as part of the interpersonal component of texts permits a more accurate description of shifts and a more precise explanation of the difference between acceptable and unacceptable shifts in point of view and tone. (Three text samples are appended.) (HOD)

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ACHIEVING IMPACT THROUGH THE INTERPERSONAL COMPONENT*

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In Halliday's systemic-functional theory of language, texts are seen as the result of semantic choices made in particular social situations. Each element of the situation--the **field** or type of social action, the **tenor** or role relationships, and the **mode** or symbolic organization of communication--is correlated with a semantic component of the text: field with the ideational component, tenor with the interpersonal component, and mode with the textual component. In turn, each semantic component "specifies its own structures,"[1] i.e. has particular grammatical and lexical categories associated with it. The semantic system thus mediates between the situation of a text and the text's linguistic surface. The particular values of each semantic component are mapped onto the text through choices in the particular grammatical and lexical categories associated with that component; the resulting text is an integrated "polyphony" of choices determined by its situation.

The application of systemic-functional linguistics to composition research and pedagogy has several benefits. One advantage lies in its emphasis on the context of situation as the motivating cause of texts. Certainly the theory is not unique in stressing the importance of

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*Given at CCCC, Detroit, March 1983.

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context in the production and reception of texts, but it is distinguished by the degree to which it explains the linguistic features of a text as determined by specific aspects of the context.[2]

Another advantage, following on this emphasis, is that the systemic-functional approach provides greater flexibility ("delicacy," a systemicist might say) in characterizing and classifying texts than standard rhetorical modes or aims of discourse. This flexibility is provided in two ways. First, texts are not classified according to a single semantic criterion like content or purpose, but rather according to a congifuration of semantic components known as a **register**. Gregory and Carroll list some types of classification possible according to each component of the semantic system:[3]

	Situational categories	Contextual categories	Semantic components	Examples of English varieties
user's	purposive role	field of discourse	ideational component	Technical English non-Technical English
	addressee relationship	tenor of discourse	interpersonal component	
	(a) personal	(a) personal tenor		Formal English, Informal English
	(b) functional	(b) functional tenor		Didactic English, non-Didactic English
	medium relationship	mode of discourse	textual component	Spoken English, Written English

Figure 1

VARIETIES OF ENGLISH
DETERMINED ACCORDING TO USE

Thus, the configuration for the register of a sermon might be defined as religious English (a kind of technical English) of a formal, didactic nature in the spoken mode. A conversation would be a register defined as non-technical English of an informal, non-didactic or didactic nature in the spoken mode.

The flexibility of this classificatory scheme is enhanced by the fact that the types listed in Figure 1 are not discrete categories, but rather terminal poles of scales. Thus texts can be placed with greater specificity relative to other texts: in terms of the ideational component, texts can be more or less technical; in terms of the interpersonal component, texts can be more or less formal and more or less didactic; even in terms of the textual component, texts can be placed relative to one another--texts can be written to be read silently, written to be read aloud, composed and recited orally, or spontaneously uttered.

Interest in the application of systemic-functional linguistics to composition has recently been fueled by the work of Halliday and Hasan (and others following them) on textual cohesion--the quality produced by the lexical choices specified by the textual component. It seems appropriate, however, given the current interest of critical theory in the interaction between writers and readers over the surface of a text, to focus on the semantic component concerned with how writers anticipate that interaction--the interpersonal component.

According to Halliday, the interpersonal component of texts consists of two types of role relationships: **social roles of the first**

order, defined without reference to language (though they may be reflected in certain lexical and grammatical choices) and **social roles of the second order**, or discourse roles, defined with reference to the particular text. The former roles (called **personal tenor** by Gregory and Carroll) may be mapped on a scale of informal vs. formal and are typically realized through such linguistic categories as pronominal choice in referring to the writer and reader as **the writer-we-I** and **the reader-we-you**. Additional lexical and grammatical features associated with first-order social roles are: "sentence" adverbials and other evaluative modifiers used to express (and thereby reveal) the writer's position in the text; deictic markers of time and space (e.g. **here** and **now**) used to refer to the extralinguistic situations of the writer and reader; verb voice, which can be used to foreground or background the agency of the writer and reader in the text; and third-person subjects--on the supposition that more formal language has a higher density of such subjects in comparison to first- and second-person subjects than informal language.[4] Figure 2 below displays the ordering of these features on a scale of informality:

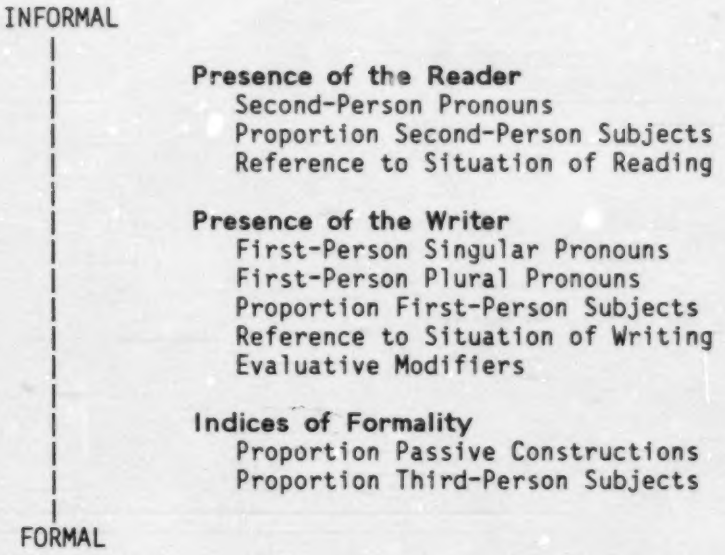

Figure 2

RANKING OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES
REALIZING PERSONAL TENOR

The features in Figure 2 are ranked according to the decreasing degree of informality that they realize. Features realizing the presence of the reader in the text are listed before those realizing the presence of the writer on the supposition that the greater the degree of interpersonality in a text (on this scale, the greater the degree of informality), the more the presence of the participants in the discourse will be explicitly acknowledged. References to the reader presuppose a writer making those references, though self-referential statements by the writer do not necessarily entail an explicitly acknowledged reader.

Second-order social roles--discourse roles-- are exemplified by Halliday with such labels as "questioner, informer, responder, doubter, contradicter, and the like."[5] This latter type of role relationship is called **functional tenor** by Gregory and Carroll and may be mapped on a

scale of didactic vs. non-didactic (with the didactic pole representing the more interactive end of the scale.)[6] Functional tenor has to do with the writer's purpose in the text (as opposed to the "purpose" involved in the field of discourse, which is usually simply an intent to communicate) and is primarily realized through the linguistic categories of clause mood and modality (with direct imperatives, for example, being used in the most strongly didactic texts).[7] These categories are ordered on a scale of didacticism below in Figure 3, analogous to the ordering of the features in Figure 2:

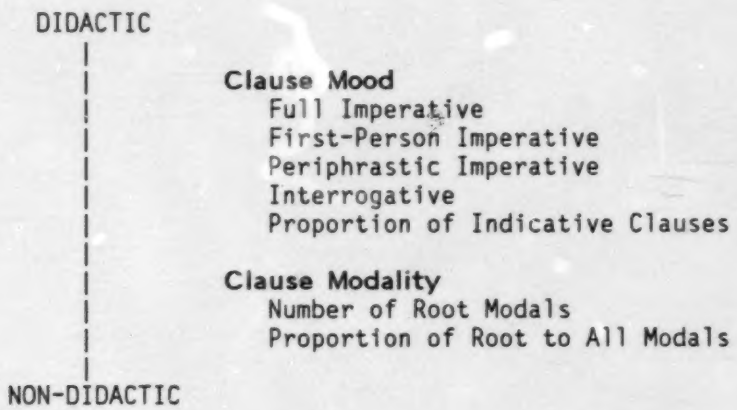

Figure 3

RANKING OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES
REALIZING FUNCTIONAL TENOR

The clause mood types in Figure 3 are listed in decreasing order of didacticism. A slightly unusual aspect of this arrangement of clause types is the inclusion of periphrastic imperatives (e.g. "For this reason the treated population **should be restricted** to not more than about 10^7 bacteria per ml,...") Such clauses are included because of their semantic force as imperatives, though they are structurally

indicative constructions. The imperative force of these constructions is also reflected in the figure indicating the number of **root** modal auxiliaries--modal verbs with the sense of permission or obligation as opposed to **epistemic** modals, which have the sense of possibility or probability--and the proportion of root to all modals.

In terms of the analysis of student texts and classroom pedagogy, the relevance of the interpersonal component is perhaps most apparent in the areas of composition instruction traditionally referred to as "point of view" and "tone." Of course, most composition texts encourage students to maintain a consistent point of view through consistent lexical and grammatical choices of a certain formality and purpose; many texts also encourage students to think of these choices within an initially determined rhetorical stance incorporating attitudes towards the reader and the subject matter. But the scalar nature of these choices--which the systemic-functional approach emphasizes, and which tend to be treated by traditional rhetorics as mono-dimensional choices-- reveals some interesting information about the kinds of shifts in point of view and tone that are acceptable vs. those that may be identified as performance errors.

The limits within which shifts in point of view and tone (i.e. formality) may occur are discussed at length by Walter Nash in **Designs in Prose**, a composition text incorporating a systemic-functional perspective. Nash writes:

> Constant shifts in tone will occur in any text that reflects the presence of its author;...tone fades away into neighbour-tone. It is not uncommon, for example, for a long text to begin in formal style and gradually ease into a collaborative [informal] manner from which renewed excursions

> into formality may be made.... But the changes are as a rule carefully and tactfully graded.[8]

An example of a gradual shift in tone from more to less formal may be seen in Text Sample A, the introduction to an exposition of potential areas of application of DNA research by an expert in the field. In the first paragraph, proponents and opponents of recombinant DNA research are referred to in the third person in lines 3 and 7; two of the superordinate clauses (lines 1-2 and lines 11-13) are expressed in the passive voice. In the second paragraph, the writer identifies more explicitly with proponents of the research through the use of the first-person plural **we** in line 19 and increased use of evaluative modifiers; here passive voice is used only in relative clauses, not in any superordinate ones. There is also a deictic reference to the situation of writing ("[t]oday") in the same line. Finally, in the third paragraph, the writer surfaces even more visibly through the use of the first-person singular I in lines 29, 33, and 36, though he also retains the **we** to refer to proponents of DNA research; again, passive voice is only used in a relative clause. Also, a deictic reference is made to the situation of both the writer and reader with the phrase "this article" in the beginning of the paragraph. The progressive informality of the first three paragraphs is a sequential movement up the scale of lexical and grammatical options presented and discussed in Figure 2.[9]

In the paragraph following, and throughout the remainder of the text, the writer returns to the level of formality set by the first paragraph--with occasional recurrences of first-person plural pronouns.

However, the first-person I never surfaces again. This is significant in terms of the limits within which "tone fades away into neighbour-tone." It seems that those limits are established by the initial degree of formality set by the text and the degree of informality achieved before the first "renewed excursion" into formality. On the scale of personal tenor, these two limits could be thought of as points on the scale, within which an acceptable range of variation is defined.[10]

Given the successful, gradual shifts in tone in Text Sample A, it is instructive to consider a text in which tone shifts abruptly and unsuccessfully. Text Sample B is a student essay produced under examination conditions in which the student was directed to conclude an editorial for which the first sentence and three options for the second sentence had been supplied. By no means are all of the problems with this essay limited to level of formality, but the student's handling of the lexical and grammatical categories discussed above contribute to the failure of this essay. Part of the problem in the essay is the student's inability to approximate the level of formality dictated by the first two sentences; thus, while evaluative modifiers are present throughout the essay, the level of formality of those modifiers is incommensurate. This may be illustrated by comparing the following sentences from the first and fourth paragraphs:

> (3) Punishment is not a **humane** way to treat a criminal; what is needed is an **effective** rehabilitation program for prisoners.

and:

(26) Society is **way too harsh** on those persons committing a crime.

The essay also contains abrupt shifts in pronominal reference. In the third paragraph (lines 17-25), the student makes a seemingly well-modulated shift from third-person reference to criminals ("**somebody** who has actually committed a crime") to a first-person plural reference ("Each of **us** has a brain...") which seems to include criminals as well as the writer and reader. This is potentially an effective rhetorical move to make the reader aware of similarities between himself or herself and criminals. However, the scope of the first-person reference does not stay consistent long enough for the move to work. In line 22, the first-person **us** seems to exclude criminals, whose minds are now referred to with the third-person singular "a human mind" and "that thinking process."

The final two paragraphs (lines 49-63) also contain some interesting problems of pronominal choice. In the second-last paragraph, criminals are referred to in the third person; this third-person use continues indirectly into the first sentence of the last paragraph. However, in the second sentence of the last paragraph, the student jumps two degrees of informality to the informal **you** to refer to prisoners:

(58) Also, prison is an everyday reminder of what **you** did and what **you're** supposed to feel bad about.

Then, in the next sentence, the student returns to the formality of third-person reference:

(60) **No one** should have to suffer for doing something which they indirectly couldn't help.

The intermediate option here would have been to use the generic **we** to modulate in the jump from most to least formal, as in the third paragraph. By moving directly from the most formal to the least formal option within the space of two contiguous sentences, the student produces abrupt shifts in tone which would probably be marked as an error by a grader.

Similar observations about shifts in functional tenor may also be made: Texts may become more didactic in function provided those shifts are modulated and that such a shift is permitted within the overall functional limits of the text.[11] The limits of variation in functional tenor are somewhat different from those established on the scale of personal tenor. Limits on the latter scale have an upper bound of informality and a lower bound of formality; the limit on the scale of functional tenor is a single, upper bound of didacticism, below which the text may vary freely in a modulated way. Typically, the problem with unsuccessful shifts in functional tenor, in texts where such shifts are permissable, is that they occur too abruptly within too short of a space. Text Sample C provides several examples of this.

Sample C is a student composition produced under the same conditions as Sample B, though with a different topic. The editorial nature of the assignment allows for a didactic, persuasive tone. However, the writer shifts mood and address within the same sentence, as in the example below from lines 38 through 43:

(38) Since smoking is a habit which is terribly hard to

> refrain from, instead of trying to totally eliminate smoking from **one's** life, **replace** it with another habit--one that is healthy. Such as, when feeling the need of a cigarette **take** a walk, **chew** a stick of gum, or **whistle**.

The writer shifts from referring to smokers with third person and indicative mood to direct address and imperatives within the same sentence. As in Figure 3, the shift from indicative to imperative mood should be modulated through periphrastic imperatives. Thus, the shifts in tone in the above passage might be corrected in the following manner:

> Since smoking **is** a habit which is terribly hard to refrain from, instead of trying to totally eliminate smoking as a habit from **one's** life, **one should replace** it with another, healthier habit--such as walking, chewing gum, or even whistling to replace the need to smoke.

Another alternative, which would retain some of the direct interactiveness of the original passage, would be:

> Since smoking **is** a habit which is terribly hard to refrain from, instead of trying to totally eliminate smoking from **one's** life, **one should replace** it with another, healthier habit. When feeling the need of a cigarette, **take** a walk, **chew** a stick of gum, or **whistle** instead.

Of course, given the fact that the writer has not used any non-indicative constructions thusfar in the first two-thirds of the text, one could argue that no imperative stronger than a periphrastic one should be used--to use more would be to transgress the functional limits established by the beginning of the text.

Thus, contrary to the conventional wisdom about maintaining a single

point of view and tone throughout a text, we see that certain shifts do occur in "professional" texts. However, the nature of these shifts on the scales of lexical and grammatical options reflecting personal and functional tenor suggests that such shifts must be modulated in order to be acceptable; unmodulated, abrupt shifts will still be perceived as mistakes. Further, such shifts must occur within the limits of variation established at the beginning of a text. The treatment of point of view and tone as part of the interpersonal component of texts, with its scales of personal and functional tenor, allows us to describe the shifts more accurately and to explain more precisely to our students the difference between acceptable and unacceptable shifts in point of view and tone. The systemic-functional perspective provides greater flexibility and greater accuracy in characterizing texts than rhetorics which seek to describe texts on a single dimension. The value of applying this perspective to research and pedagogy in composition should thus be evident.

TEXT SAMPLE A

(emphasis added)

1 The advent and development of recombinant DNA **has been portrayed** as very much a mixed blessing for mankind. While **proponents** have hailed it as a source of technology that will someday solve many of the problems of environmental pollution, food and energy shortages, and human diseases, including inborn genetic disorders, its **opponents** have **bitterly** criticized research in this area because of the possibilities for accidental development and release of **highly** virulent forms of infective agents that may lead to epidemic diseases of unknown proportions. The wisdom of developing bacterial strains capable of expressing genetic segments of eukaryotes **has also been questioned**. Each view is supported by major groups of scientists.

15 The **basic** problem in reconciling such **sharply divergent** viewpoints is that in most cases both the benefits and the biohazards that **have been ascribed** to the development of recombinant DNA technology are **highly speculative. Today, we** are **still far** from any **demonstrated** success at producing antibodies or blood-clotting factors by fermentation, or making plants fix their own nitrogen because of insertion of bacterial nitrogen-fixation genes. Conversely, however, the suggestions of E. coli harboring human cancer or cancer virus genes or (2) developing **highly** virulent traits because of accidental introduction of uncharacterized DNA segments **appear equally far-fetched, speculative, and exaggerated.**

29 **This article** has two purposes. First, I should like to list and discuss some of the **major** areas where **beneficial** applications of recombinant DNA technology **are envisioned**, whether in the near or in the more distant future. Second, I should like to note certain of those areas where both the barriers to technological success, and the potential hazards attendant upon success, **appear** to be of **less formidable** proportions. I believe that **we may** harvest some **tangible** benefits within a **relatively short** time, and with **little** risk, if **we** develop the new technology in a **meaningful** way.

Apart from scientific applications toward the greater understanding of the nature and mode of regulation of eukaryotic genes, several broad areas of application of recombinant DNA technology are recognized in industry, agriculture, and medicine. Briefly stated, these are (1) in the manufacture of drugs, chemicals, and fuels--specifically, polypeptide hormones, vaccines, enzymes, and low-cost fermentation products such as solvents, alcohol, and methane; (2) in the improvement of crop plants and crop yields, both by the extension of existing cross-breeding technologies and by the incorporation of nitrogen-fixation genes into either the crop plants themselves or their normal microbial symbionts; and (3) in the treatment of genetic disease, by deliberately introducing fragments of functional eukaryotic or prokaryotic genes into the cells of human patients.

TEXT SAMPLE B

(emphasis added)

1 Prevailing penal practices often allow convicted murderers back on the street within a short period of time. Punishment is not a **humane** way to treat a criminal; what is needed is an **effective** rehabilitation program for prisoners. By placing a person in prison, society is making the prisoner more angry. This would account for the crimes that have been committed over and over again.

9 There are two situations to look at when placing somebody in prison. The first case to be looked at is whether the person actually committed the crime. All too often, innocent people are serving time for something they didn't do. If just one person has to receive this type of treatment even though he is truly innocent, that is,[sic] in itself enough reason to abolish the death penalty.

17 There are many ways to look at the second case also, which is **somebody** who actually committed the crime. Each of **us** has a brain, which thought processes are constantly being run through. So **our** minds contribute greatly to society. It's terrible to waste **a human mind** in life, and would be better for **us** all to put **that thinking process** to good work. Of course, **the person** must be able to live so as to get a chance to achieve this.

26 Society is **way too harsh** on those persons commit[illegible]ing a crime. How do they know about each individuals[sic] background and all the problems they had.[sic] If these so[sic]called "crim[illegible]nals" were accepted by society and not looked down upon, there would be less crime.

31 There is no way I would advocate the death penalty. People can and do change for the better. I believe those people committing crimes should be given another chance. Rehabilitation is important if done in the correct way. This way, I feel, is to let the person feel more free about himself, not trapped or encircled by guilt feelings. Rehabilitation should try to accomplish this along with putting the idea of self-worth into the prisoners[sic] mind. It may be hard to erase or override all the years that taught him to feel so low about himself, but with time, I feel that a sense of personal gratitude can be instilled upon him.

43 I truly feel that this would be the most effective method in handling prisoners, rather than prison or the death penalty. Society would benefit from having people who feel good about themselves, and the prisoner would benefit from having a new feeling and a sense of accomplishment.

49 The reasoning being used here is that **people** who commit crimes have had guilt feelings most likely all **their** lives, especially in childhood. Having to be put down constantly is not the best type of situation to have when growing up. Parents are a major factor for inducing guilt upon **a child**. So why should **the child** have to suffer in adult life for something **he** couldn't prevent in the first place.[sic]

57 By exercising the death penalty, there is no compassion whatsoever for human feelings. Also, prison is an everyday reminder of what **you** did and what **you're** supposed to feel bad about. **No one** should have to suffer for doing something which **they** indirectly couldn't help. All in all, the death penalty, as I see it [sic] serves no purpose whatsoever, other than wasting a good and useful human life no matter what was done or whoever may have done it.

TEXT SAMPLE C

(emphasis added)

1 Cigarette smoking is a useless habit which no one enjoys. Many older smokers are giving up cigarettes, but there[sic] numbers are made up for by the thousands of young people who are beginning to smoke. These young people don't realize (or don't care) what harm or damage is being done to themselves by smoking cigarettes. A person who smoke[sic] cigarettes can easily be pointed out when performing some form of exercises because of the heavy panting. Cigarette smoking seems to cause the lungs of a smoker to shrink, because a smoker never seems to be able to breath[sic] with regularity when exerting some kind of physical action.

13 Billy Carter, the Presidents'[sic] brother, has to suck in air every few minutes because he smokes. Billy, as reknown[sic] as he may be, does not create a very favorable impression because he sounds more like a strangled victim than a fluent speaker.

18 By the examples the older generation is demonstrating, it would seem that the younger generation would take notice of the movement to give up cigarettes and stop or not even begin cigarette smoking.

22 An excellent example of why a person should not smoke cigarettes is first [sic] hand knowledge of a person who has smoke[sic] all her life and is now a living tradegy[sic]. This person has yellowed [sic] stained fingertips, yellow bags under her eyes, and she, like Billy, gasps for air. This person is like she is on a continuous cold-turkey when without a cigarette. Her eyes go spastic, her hands and body tremble and shiver untill[sic] she takes a puff off her cigarette.

31 Young people may start smoking because of peer pressure, because "it's cool," or because "it's just something to do." The young people go under the pretense that their smoking is only temporary but the temporary smoking habit usually lasts for about twenty years. Than[sic] the smokers finally realize what a harmful and useless habit smoking is.

38 Since smoking **is** a habit which is terribly hard to refrain from, instead of trying to totally eliminate smoking from **one's** life, **replace** it with another habit--one that is healthy. Such as, when feeling the need of

a cigarette [sic] **take** a walk, **chew** a stick of gum, or **whistle**.

44 If an older smoker would speak about the effects of smoking to a person who has or is just starting to smoke [sic] the person would most likely stop because it is frightening to hear what cigarettes can do to a healthy mind and body.

49 More propaganda about stopping or baning[sic] cigarettes should be used. If the younger generation was more aware of the potency of cigarettes, there would be a large decrease in the percentage of smokers.

53 Cigarette smoking is an unimagenative[sic] way to combat anxiety or nervousness.

55 Once one makes a decision to stop smoking, don't procrastinate,[sic] the delayance will only prolong the way back to achieving a healthy mind and sound body.

[1] M. A. K. Halliday, "Text as Semantic Choice in Social Contexts," in **Grammars and Descriptions**, ed. Teun A. van Dijk and Janos S. Petofi (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), p. 176.

[2] See Ruqaiya Hasan, "Text in the Systemic-Functional Model," in **Current Trends in Textlinguistics**, ed. Wolfgang U. Dressler (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), pp. 228-46. There, Hasan writes that "the correlation [between contextual elements and lexical and grammatical choices] is causally determined, with certain contextual variables functioning as control...." (p. 230).

[3] Michael Gregory and Susanne Carroll, **Language and Situation: Language Varieties and Their Social Contexts**, (London: Routledge Kegan-Paul, 1978), p. 10.

[4] The latter three categories are my own additions to the list of features supplied by Halliday, p. 180.

[5] Halliday, p. 202.

[6] The choice of the didactic end of the scale as the more interactive may strike the reader as somewhat counter-intuitive. However, didactic texts typically necessitate more reader involvement--even if only to reject the position or action being urged--than non-didactic texts which intend only to describe or narrate.

[7] Though Gregory and Carroll help to delineate Halliday's first- and second-order social roles more, they do not separate the lexical and grammatical features realizing the interpersonal value of a text into two groups along the same lines (nor does Halliday). This separation is my own innovation and, as we shall see, later, is useful in distinguishing the differing values of interpersonality assigned to

texts when they are considered on the two different scales related to the two types of tenor.

[8] (London: Longmans, 1980), pp. 132-33.

[9] Thus, the degree of interpersonality is not simply a cumulative measure of the number of features of a particular kind in a text (in fact, it is possible to imagine a text that overuses certain pronominal forms). Degree of interpersonality also involves the range of features of a particular category, e.g. pronominal choice.

[10] This parallels Joos' notion in **The Five Clocks** (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1961) about limiting the range of movement on the scale of styles.

[11] It is a common error in student compositions for a text whose overall aim is non-didactic, e.g. expository, to shift into a more didactic function overall. However, on a sentential level, a text whose overall function is didactic will still have many sentences which are non-didactic in clause mood and modality.